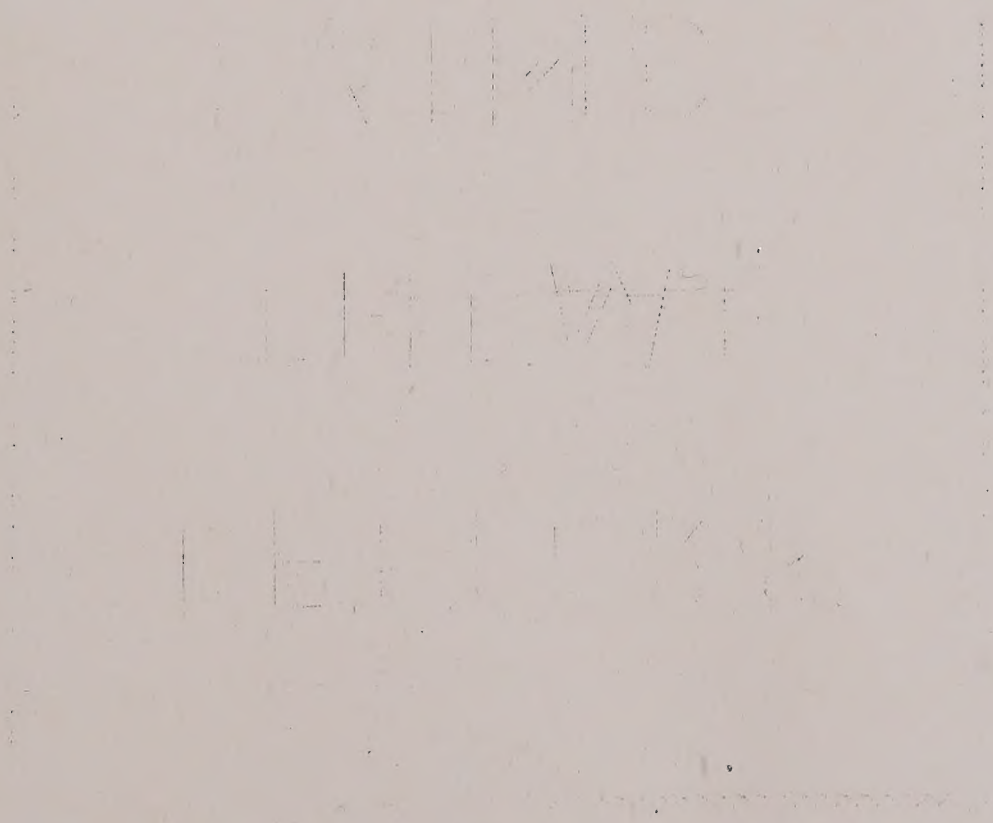
LETTERS
THEME
MIND

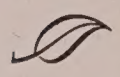


LETTERS

to my great-grandson, Theodor Holm Nelson, a student at Swarthmore College, now in his senior year; from a science teacher and author now in his eighty-seventh year.

LETTERS

THEME: MIND



Written

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Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-nine

by

EDMUND GALE JEWETT

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A SUGGESTION

There is no preface. Perhaps you should read the postscript first. Then you may decide you do not want to read the letters. But if you do read them, you will find that the postscript is really a postscript.

Horatio. *O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.*

Hamlet. *And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.*

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

PRELIMINARY

Dear Ted:

There's no notion of sending this letter to you immediately. I know you are much engrossed in your studies. You should choose lighter literature for your diversion. But, as an artist may catch a glimpse of a landscape and be filled with an impulse to record his impressions in a painting, having the semblance of permanency, so I, looking abroad on the life of humanity, have a similar motive.

I am not doubting the ephemeral character of thoughts, "like a fast-flying cloud." Perhaps I should give the converse of the image: like a beam of clear sunlight that comes through a break in the clouds of a dark and leaden sky. It too sweeps over the earth and is gone.

I have just been reading a brief report of the geophysical year, given in the Sunday supplement of the Tribune. How complicated, unbelievably complicated. But the minds that are doing all this, what of them? No anthropo-psychical year has yet been appointed, but there is constant progress in knowledge of the mind. It is interesting to note that in the field of physical sciences religions once assumed the right to make dogmatic statements. That is not now so general. But in the field of the psychical religious concepts still prevail. I shall not presume to say whether this be well or ill. Humanity must progress by small steps and many a slip. Steady gleams ahead rather than lightning flashes behind should light the way.

Perhaps I should here, as in a parenthesis, add a general caution: Take not toys from children. Toys have their use. And who knows, with all our solid blocks of learning, whether we shall build more worthy lives.

Later I will be sending you one letter a day. You can read each one as it comes, after the day's work is done, just before going to bed; and so drift down the stream of my thought without effort.

Good night,

Edmund.

NOT—MIND

You can guess from yesterday's letter that my interest is largely in the human individual. So I shall write first about my concept of the human mind.

The word, "mind." What does it connote? We should first have agreement about that. Let us begin with what it is not. I do not think that the word applies to any aspect of a boulder lying in a field. The age-enduring atoms and molecules, the inertia of its motion together with the eastward turning earth where it lies, the cohesion of its parts, the absorption of energy in the form of heat when the sunlight falls upon it, the radiation from its surface when exposed to the night sky, — in none of these

aspects do I find mind. Nor do I need to assume mind in any part of the process that has left it a stone in the field. But we are near a difficult matter which must be discussed when we are considering religions.

I will leave to you to consider the concrete abutment of a railroad bridge. We may find mind in the offing.

Imagine that it is winter. The air is cold. Snow is falling. A single flake rests on the stone in the field. Here is symmetry, a thing of beauty, a delight to the eye and to the mind. Must it not have been a delight also to the mind that made it? We must pause here. In a free molecule of water there are two hydrogen atoms attached to one atom of oxygen. As the molecule under certain conditions becomes attached to others, all lose their identity and form a lattice work. The "plan of six" is due to the relative numbers of hydrogen and oxygen atoms. A different formula would give a different pattern.

One will find that different snow storms have characteristic types of flakes due to slight atmospheric differences where the flakes are formed. In this I do not find mind. But I grant the human mind finds it interesting.

I see that I am getting into more complications than I expected. I have decided to hold the letters and get a chance to make them better related, one to another.

MIND IN PLANTS

To your imagination, Salaams:

It is summer. "Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not neither do they spin, but I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." So, in his time, the Hebrew poet saw the wild-flowers on the hills of Palestine. We too may be aware of their beauty, and know them further as bright and fragrant seducers of bees, — the bee's life having a needful part in the life of the flower, and the flower a needful part in the life of the bee. This is something we did not find in yesterday's letter. Like a snowflake this flower has symmetry, but its symmetry is not built by molecules impinging on its surface. (accretion) This was built from within. (intersusception) A more complex chemistry is involved. And, of greater significance, it is not so distinctly an individual as is the snowflake. It has ancestry. We must view it, if we wish for understanding, as one of a long succession of individuals in the evolution of a form, a kind, a variety, a species. Its memory of form and color and fragrance comes from its forebears. In general, it is an ancestor worshiper, it is "true to type."

We speak of its memory. But memory must not be taken as a thing in itself. It has a counterpart in the tiny particles of matter engaged in chemical changes too subtle for analysis.

We have not left the realm of matter, but we have come into the realm of mind. All about us is a marvelous and interesting world.

SYMBOLIC AND NON-SYMBOLIC

Logically we should consider the non-symbolic first. It is for each of us the first in time, the original and originating mind. It probably is the only mind in plants. Some biologists consider it coeval with and coextensive with all life — "the film of matter that makes so beautiful the warm and nourishing earth." When it becomes individualized, so to speak, in the fertile ovum it reveals both aspects, mind and matter. So we shall speak of the non-symbolic as the primary or primal mind. The symphony of the new life is played by an orchestra of atoms. The symphony is not finished till the life ends.

I realize that in common parlance the word mind means the symbolic mind — the symbolic human mind. Let us establish a contrast: At this moment, after dinner, certain cells in my digestive tract, I hope, are generating hydrochloric acid. I do not claim that as part of my "knowledge." But I can imagine, or remember, a certain bottle in the laboratory containing a white substance and labeled "sodium chlorid." That white stuff goes into a flask containing a small quantity of water. Another bottle containing "sulfuric acid" I see and touch and lift. Its fluid pours down a thistle tube and colorless bubbles of gas rise into the flask. etc. etc. My memories of action, my written words to describe it, or the sounds that the written words represent, are all symbols. They represent the action of the symbolic mind.

The paragraph just written depicts the symbolic mind as fully formed and functioning. Let us glance back to its beginning. Even here is seen a distinct difference between the two types of mind. The primal mind comes as a spark from the great fire of life. The symbolic mind begins in a very different way. We imagine the process to be something like this: Sense impressions occur and memory functions. Memory is essential. Without it there will be no symbolic mind. Sense impressions as experienced, contrasted with the same but less vivid as remembered, gradually give a sense of recurrence and succession. So time becomes a fixture of the mind. In like manner two sense impressions, identical but for degree of vividness, may give a sense of different positions on the body, and gradually space becomes a fixture of the mind. However, it is quite possible that position and space come by way of the primal mind. Later there is an awareness of being aware, and a symbolic mind is in being. "I" is being established in the consciousness.

The primary urges, of course, come from the primary mind. These by way of the active and imaginative symbolic mind go below the threshold of consciousness which is the great depository of memory. Here is where certain psychologists delve with important results. Even as the earth is not habitable everywhere, so the mind has not everywhere a salubrious climate. One should be able to choose where to live.

There is an awesome aspect of the primal mind. I suppose the fact is known to you, that each of

us, early in the development from a single cell, began to form the circulation of a fish in which the blood passes from the heart through the gills to the body. This is soon absorbed and replaced. What a glimpse into "the "abysm of time" it gives the embryologist. Someone has suggested that a physical body should not be considered as limited in space by its surfaces; for its fields of force, electrical, magnetic and gravitational, are "part and parcel" of the body. In like manner the organic being is related to cosmic time. Am I older than the Alps? Perhaps we should only play with the idea, tossing it about, lest it grow too heavy for us.

Some other time that word "I," used in my question, must be discussed,—the smallest word in the language, the most frequently used, perhaps the vaguest and most misleading.

Sleep well. Your primary mind, your angel from eons gone by, will not sleep. All is well.

WISDOM OF THE BODY AND REALM OF THE SPIRITUAL

There was a graduate from the Harvard School of Medicine who later became a member of the faculty. (He had been a classmate of mine in the St. Paul High School.) He wrote a book near the end of his life called, "The Wisdom of the Body." What insight Dr. Walter B. Cannon had in choosing that title. How much the title tells. "The Wisdom of the Body." It is an ancient wisdom antedating all antedating, from times before words were spoken or any symbols used.

We have some knowledge of the brain and nervous system. We have a notion that it would not have come into being but for the fact that it is a means of survival. To some persons there is an implication of purpose. But events may occur without purpose. The rainbow is the result of the refraction and reflection of white light by millions of raindrops. We can enjoy it for its beauty, though we feel no assurance that there will be no more floods.

"The Wisdom of the Body." It is the wisdom for life, and it is the wisdom for death. If I think of myself as an island thrust up from the sea of oblivion, already I am aware of the waves that are beating on my coasts. Sometime, suddenly, I shall sink beneath the waves and the sea will cover me. Deep. Deep. Deeper than the mists that have come upon me so often, and have vanished with each dawning of consciousness.

Yet I accept this. It is the way that organic life must maintain itself — constant replacement.

That acceptance I see as an attitude of mind, not a content of the mind such as a ball perceived by the senses, nor even a "pure concept" as the sphere of a mathematician.

We have not left the precincts of the mind, but we have inadvertently entered a new realm. Perhaps the word, "acceptance," represents one of the least of the values, hardly a coin of the realm. We must enter this realm again, if we would "see life steadily and see it whole."

This morning as I was out walking for exercise I passed a church. I noticed a bulletin board near the sidewalk and paused to read it. On it was displayed in graceful letters the following:

"A PRAYER

May I have serenity to accept that which cannot be changed.

May I have courage to change that which should be changed.

May I have wisdom to distinguish one from the other."

Reinhold Niebuhr, 1935.

"Serenity, courage, wisdom." This is the realm I mentioned. I shall need a word for it. The term in common use is "spiritual." Perhaps I should choose a less burdened word, but let us use it for the present as I have suggested.

This is the longest stroll to which I have invited you. I too am weary. Take your rest.

SEMANTICS

I do not feel at all satisfied with the last letter. I used the word "spiritual" in a sense not generally accepted. Let us reconsider.

We had left the realm of ideas held by the mind, and had come to attitudes held by the personality. Of course, those attitudes become ideas as we discuss them.

The attitude of acceptance which we came upon does not have reference to another human being. So it is not moral. It is the attitude of the self toward the total non-self. I would consider it religious. It is "an humbleness of mind." To me it is an attitude "devoutly to be desired." Recently, in reading the Sermon on the Mount, I noticed in particular the first beatitude, "Blessed are the humble in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". This fragment of the sermon is pure religion. Much else is ethics.

Attitudes are many. Taken together they constitute the world of the spiritual. Many relate to human beings, probably the chief part of our world. In that case they will be ethical, good or bad. Our language indicates that they are generally judged by the actions to which they lead, beneficent or maleficent. Or we may wish to imply a conscious desire (will) for the result, and say benevolent or malevolent. If we found it necessary to conduct a purely scientific discussion, we might go to the Greek, as scientists so often do, and describe attitudes as agathons or kakathons. The "thons" are inert material indicating the realm of attitudes.

But consider all the above as a diversion. I shall use the word spiritual and trust that you will gather from the context the right meaning. The experience of the hearer may be more important than the choice of words by the speaker.

While we are on the subject of words, let me remark: The word God I use in the sense of Emanuel. The word anthropology I use in its widest sense with a forward look as well as the usual backward look. The word spiritual I confine to at-

titudes of the individual, — to intents, purposes, the direction of the energies.

Two difficulties are here encountered: first, the linkage between thought and emotion; second, the fact that the realm of the spiritual cannot be draughted geometrically, nor can its parts be numbered consecutively. Among the lowest of the emotions are envy, hate, and the wanton destructiveness of beauty, righteousness and truth. Among the highest we may place love which, with balanced justice seeks the highest state of being both for the self and for others, also faith in life and joy in life, and humbleness of mind without which there is no true vision. In conformity with general usage, I shall use the word spiritual only for the highest intents of the individual.

It should be noticed that, when the idea of self arises, the idea of non-self must also exist. The self includes the body and its primal mind, also the symbolic mind and its submerged portion, the unconscious. The self and the non-self together constitute for each his cosmos.

When I think of the beauty of human lives, and then of the biological base of it all, I am aware of an implicit tragedy: the more beautiful, the more tragic.

It is time to cease from the confusion of words, time for silence and sleep.

THE HUMAN PERSONALITY AND THE GOD EXPERIENCE

Having come so far, I see there are two prospects before us, — a further study of the human personality, and a general discussion of the nature of religion, which involves and reveals the individual consciousness.

I have made my choice, and I feel I must strike out boldly to explore some traits of the human personality. I shall probably get into that morass represented by the word "I."

Into the symbolic mind there is a fairly constant coming of sense impressions. That is not as simple as it sounds. For sense impressions, almost from the start, have been bundled into concepts, and the concepts, have qualified the percepts.

Among all the concepts, there develops a primary one, namely, "I". This might be considered to arise from the experience of the primary mind as expressed in the body. But it is noteworthy that a person may lose a limb or his eyesight and not lose one whit of his sense of "I".

Now it may avoid confusion if we accept a unity where we have endeavored to establish a disunity (symbolic and non-symbolic mind), and use for that concept the word personality.

The strength of the "I" bundle is indeed fortunate. The formation of two similar bundles is pathological. (schizophrenia)

As anthropologists are prone to do, we should now consider some

phenomena appearing among the more ignorant. For instance, there is animism, the assignment of mind to inanimate objects. I am aware that a technical difference may be made between animism and personification; but they show the same tendency of the mind. We generally associate this tendency with primitive peoples. But let us not assume that we are free from it. The Trojans and the Romans had their Lares and Penates. Even the Greeks, the most intellectual of the Ancients, show the same tendency. Note their entire mythology. I recall that Xenephon in his Anabasis mentions that the Euphrates river was unusually low at a place where the army had to cross it. That was a good omen. The river knew that a king was coming. Again, when the retreating army was in the mountains south of the Euxine, a blizzard came upon them. The poorly-clad Greeks faced death from cold. In this emergency they offered sacrifices to Boreas, (the north wind) and "Many noticed that the storm slackened."

We should not consider personification a mere aberration of the wandering mind. It abounds in common speech, and contributes greatly to the beauty and power of poetry.

Matter may be considered mindfull, or mind may be considered as controlling matter, but somehow separate from it. Recall the Ark of the Covenant among the Hebrews; idols and oracles among the Greeks; the prayers for rain among the Zuni Indians, or among Christian farmers; the song, "Bless this house"; and Kipling's "Lord of the far-flung battle line"; — all prayers of persuasion. God is still considered the Almighty, but also the Inscrutable. This concept of God is, in most people, simply accepted from the traditions of the community, or from a priesthood, or taken from a sacred book. Many modify the concept from personal experience.

Another conception, which might be described as purely philosophical, considers God as the all-embracing (pantheism). This may be attributed to the restive search for a universal frame of reference, for certainty and finality.

Now I am going to venture a suggestion, a mere suggestion. Later it will demand a fuller consideration: In the mind of the poet and that ultra-poet, the mystic, a direct experience of God arises. God is the personification of the higher spiritual part of the personality, as real as the "I," and of the same kind of reality.

This personification, in most of us, is a matter of degree. If God is in complete dominance, all of life is divine — thoughts, words, and deeds. There is no need for sacrament or ritual. I hold in high respect the philosophically-minded who place the highest intents of the mind in control and strive to lead "the good life." But I think the mystically endowed find the moral life made more easy, and the whole of life more beautiful because they sense the reality of the divine.

I have placed this suggestion purposely at the end of the letter. You better "sleep on it." Let us recall Shakespeare's lines on sleep,

themselves a personification: "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, great Nature's second nurse, balm of hurt minds." I hope I have not, like Macbeth, "murdered sleep."

POSTSCRIPT TO NUMBER SEVEN

"Each morning sees some task begun,
Each evening sees its close."

So I must hammer it out. I ended yesterday's letter rather abruptly. Sometimes there seems no good way of finishing it. Meantime there has doubtless come to your mind a very pertinent question: "Why not consider that a man may personify his evil tendencies, or his whole evil personality?" He does and becomes more depraved by so doing. What can be done about it? Very little. It is true that in a different environment, or under the stress of emotion, a change of perception may occur, like the shifting of the gears in a car. To us of the modern world that figure is clear. Long ago Jesus said "born again". I am reminded of other phrases: "Men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles." "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. By their fruits you shall know them". Recall that despairful cry, "If the light within you be darkness, how great is that darkness."

Perhaps the scientific study of the human mind may pave the way for progress,—wiser parents, wiser teachers, wiser preachers.

RELIGIONS IN GENERAL

To an astute observer:

Most human beings are much involved in some kind of religion, both its practices and its beliefs. From what roots does this spring? You, as a student of anthropology, are probably more competent to answer our enquiry than am I. Nevertheless, I will make some jottings. Some time ago I designated a spiritual realm. Now I discuss religion. They are not the same thing.

In most primitive religions the tap root is fear. The main purpose of these religionists is to ward off evil. They generally believe in sinister powers (devils) which can be propitiated by certain rites and ceremonies, or evoked to do harm, as the phrase has it, "Cursed of God". The deity may be called "God" but can hardly be distinguished from a demon. You have seen in the Museum of Natural History, New York, the replica of an Aztec altar. Hearts were torn out while still throbbing. Wars were waged to obtain victims.

A contrasting and higher type stems from the attempt to explain physical phenomena. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the

deep." The whole chapter reveals the mind of a poet. In recent centuries the scientist has come upon the scene, not without the resistance of organized religion. (Galileo, Bruno, Darwin)

As this is the prevailing philosophy of our religious community, I should like to comment on it. The conception is called, "Deus ex Machina". It is the keystone of the arch of religious concepts.

The "uniformity of nature" is taken as the evidence of a single creative mind (monotheism). "The laws of nature are the thoughts of God". With this concept firmly established, any extraordinary occurrence, apparently made to accomplish a specific purpose, is taken as evidence of the existence of a miracle-working God. (As scientists we have to accept the fact that we live in a believing world, and adjust our minds to this phenomenon.)

As a case in point, you probably recall that only a year or two ago it was officially announced, as a doctrine to be believed, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken to heaven, and her body saw no corruption. This must have distressed many good Catholics, some in the priesthood. Others, no doubt, found it comforting. I, myself, a mere observer had a feeling of surprise and disappointment at the anachronism. I had not realized how great is the inertia of ideas. To some persons, sheer belief is considered a virtue. To other persons, skepticism is an evidence of the mind's integrity. Such is the world we live in.

I do not wonder that the religious, "Medievally-minded" world was aroused over Darwin's theory of the origin of species. There was at first a comparatively easy shift from the literal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis to a poetical understanding. "Days" began to mean "periods of time". The more important idea of a fiat creation could still be held. The newer idea was quite in keeping with the conception of God the Eternal. The story of the "fall of man" still permitted the idea of a perfect Creator to be retained. But that is not the whole story of the interaction of religious and scientific ideas. When one for several years has lived with a scientific conception of the evolution of organic life, he seems to see that there is no ideal toward which the whole moves. In every case there is adaptation toward conditions prevailing at the time. In other words, he finds no ideal, or Final Cause, to accomplish which events were set in motion by the Great Originator. We see in evolution a process, not a completed whole. This letter, this idea, is also part of a process of developing ideas both in the individual and in society, not at all a last word.

There is an instinct (primary mind) in every organic being, even in the plant world, for holding to life. Let me quote from Albert Schweitzer: "The fundamental idea in our conscience to which we come back each time we want to reach comprehension of ourselves, and our situation in the world, is: I am life wanting to live, surrounded by life wanting to live. Meditating upon life, I feel the obligation to respect any will-to-live around me as equal to mine and as having a mysterious value." (The Evolution of Ethics, in the Atlantic

Monthly, Nov., 1958) That wanting-to-live continues in human beings, and goes further into a sense of immortality. Such a belief is fostered by an emotion, not self-centered, but arising from the love of others who are with us no longer.

I have been told that anthropologists consider those creatures as human, although primitive, who have buried their dead, especially if they have placed with the body implements useful for another life. This belief, this emotion, has lovely aspects. I would not wipe it out from the beliefs of mankind. But it is not always to be condoned. Consider the Egyptians, especially the pyramids, monuments to human fallacy and cruelty.

The pyramids and the sacred cats of Egypt belong to the ancient world. But we can find in this present world religious concepts destructive of human welfare on this planet. Consider the present situation in India. A careful study by an impartial commission places the probably increase in population in the next ten years as 88,000,000. This would not be so frightening if the population already were not pressing on the food supply. Animals of the bovine species, estimated at many millions, are allowed to roam about destroying crops. These animals cannot be eliminated. They are sacred. I doubt if even sterilization of animals will be permitted. The Hindu doctrine is that souls may be reincarnated in men or beasts, — in fact are doomed to successive reincarnations in human and animal forms until nirvana is attained. This gives rise to the protection of all animal life. A moral problem will soon confront us. Our own land produces more food than we need. Should we by shipment of food try to mitigate a condition produced by excessive breeding of the human species and destructive religous concepts? Food shipments alone will not solve the problem for any long period of time. We may have to witness stark and terrible famine in a fair land.

There is another deep psychological source of religion, the conviction of sin. To me this conviction is a hopeful sign. It indicates that man is developing a more acute ethical sense. But again, it is not always to be condoned. A troubled conscience is often normal and necessary and salutary. But the "conviction of sin", often fostered by religions, may be destructive of personal integrity, and may result in the loss of the individual as a factor in human society. (e.g. Desert hermits, flagilants, certain monastic orders, asylums for the insane.)

The heaviest indictment against religions in general is their preposterous use as an excuse for war (e.g. the Islamic conquests, the Crusades).

This letter can be considered only suggestive. There are books on the same subject.

More than half the people in this country are members or adherents of some church. In many Catholic countries the ratio is even greater. In several countries the religious system is established and supported by the state. The Christian religion, whether established or not, is a vital part of our civilization. Tomorrow I shall sketch the early growth of the Christian religion.

I find no evidence that Jesus foresaw the present religion of Christendom. Historically, the Christian religion has served to preserve and carry forward the ethics of the Great Teacher. I read recently, with an enquiring mind, the Acts of the Apostles in the original Greek. Only twice is Jesus directly quoted; once the saying, so often realized as true: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Also is quoted, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The shock that the death of Jesus gave to his disciples and friends, in fact to the whole nation, is hard for us to realize. (Cf. the death of Socrates, or in our time, the assassination of Lincoln.) The finding of the empty tomb, and the various appearances started the recovery. (Cf. Phantasms of the Dead, London Society for Psychical Research.) Closely following came the strange phenomenon of Pentecost, probably psychical, but considered at the time as a physical sign.

For a while the Christian community lived largely on the wealth already accumulated by its members. What need of a provision for the future when a Messianic Era would change all the conditions of life? There was early a rapid growth in membership.

The believers soon became bold, a trait of their Master, and condemned openly the religious hierarchy. The conception of God, traditional among the Jews, played a part. Peter, in his public condemnation, allowed that the crucifixion must have been accomplished "with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Thus the Jewish idea of an offering for sin, vicarious atonement, became a part, and probably the chief part to date of the Christian religion. (Cf. the Roman Catholic Mass, the Episcopal Prayer Book, the Protestant Ritual for Communion, and the evangelist, Billy Graham.)

Persecutions resulted in creating a proselytizing spirit and the scattering of the faithful. Groups of believers organized themselves into churches. Paul, for a time, continued speaking in synagogues. To the group in Antioch first was given the name, Christians. The sect, heresy in Greek, was largely dominated by Jewish ideas. Only gradually were some of those ideas abandoned. It is interesting to note that, when the controversy over circumcision became acute, a delegation was sent to lay the matter before the Apostles in Jerusalem. The delegation was finally instructed to say that the rite could be dropped, but the churches were admonished in four particulars, three pertaining to Kosher food, one a matter of general morality.

The Sabbath was taken directly from Jewish customs. The Christians instituted the day as a memorial, as the Jews had done. Rigid rules for the observance of the Sabbath have often developed in Christian communities, as in colonial New England. At present our laws and customs are based on moral considerations. The day doubtless contributes to the wel-

fare of the individual and to the betterment of society.

The Eucharist is not derived from Jewish rituals, but in its origin is closely associated with the Feast of the Passover. Jesus had arranged and greatly desired to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. Although he was aware of what awaited him on the morrow, he maintained his serenity. He knew one would betray him and dismissed him from the group. He knew also that none of the men about him would ever again partake of the bread and wine of a Passover without remembering the upper chamber, the long table, the group of disciples, and the Son of Man in an exalted hour.

The gradual and important changes in Christian doctrine that have been made are matters of history. The formation of "splinter groups" in a free society like ours is a significant phenomenon. The Roman Catholic Church is wisely designed to satisfy certain human needs. It can change only as those needs change. What is to be done in the present situation? Nothing, directly. I would not deny to any adherent of any religion the satisfaction of his needs. But in this modern world his needs must change.

One important observation I have omitted — a change of emphasis. Two stories illustrate: When a young man came to Jesus with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus placed the emphasis on keeping the Law. A few years later the same question received from Paul this answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The relative importance of faith and works is still a moot question. Churches that require for membership acceptance of a creed must emphasize faith. Martin Luther placed the primary emphasis on faith.

The drift in human thought is determined by strong winds. This is an age of science. Scientific knowledge profoundly modifies thought, and the study of science changes the mental habits. Also, I think, there is a rise in distinctly human traits. The conception of a God demanding human sacrifice has become ethically and aesthetically impossible to many. Changes in religious doctrine have occurred. We may expect change to continue.

In considering the beginnings of Christianity, we should not forget the vitalizing effect of a belief in a Messianic Era. It was to be heralded by the second coming of Christ. The expectation gradually faded as years passed. Gentiles became prominent in the churches, and the idea of a Jewish kingdom was lost. The church in Rome considered itself the appointed representative of Christ. That idea gradually was substituted for the older idea of a personal reign. However, the original idea still persists. It is found in "Holy Writ," in hymns, and in some rituals; also in the beliefs of some Christians, notably the Adventists.

Two apologies are needed at the end of this letter, one for its length, and one for its brevity.

There must be one more letter. The name, Jesus, has been mentioned so frequently I feel it is incumbent on me to write more.

Not that I am competent; nor is anyone competent on the basis of the four Gospels. But the impressions of one modern man, who has enjoyed length of days, might be interesting.

The pen stops, though the stream of thought flows on.

THE MIND OF JESUS

I have written frankly and freely about the Christian religion. What could be my understanding of Jesus?

His conception of God:

I have looked in the four Gospels to find in him the conceptions already mentioned, one from traditional religion, and one from the personification of his own spiritual life. I could not establish my idea from the record, but my surmise suffers no contradiction. He was a poet, and thought as a poet. His idea of God, "Our Father," I think came from a superb personality. Sometimes current beliefs seem to govern him, as in the cleansing of the temple, or the maledictions against certain cities, or in his notion of the Jews as the chosen people of God.

The fundamental purpose of his life:

He was to hasten the coming of the Messianic Era of Jewish history, and to fulfill the prophesies as to what must occur before the coming of that era. The Jews were a minor people, politically dominated, enslaved and oppressed. Their God had by miraculous means, so the story goes, brought them out from slavery in Egypt, and through years of wandering in the wilderness into the promised land. Later they had wept by the waters of Babylon. Now they were under the stern rule of the Romans. Frustrated in their dream of direct interference by their national deity, they had found compensation in a splendid dream that had been growing clearer among them since the Babylonian captivity. There was to be a Messianic Era established by their almighty, miracle-working Jehovah.

John, a cousin of Jesus, who had lived in the desert, and was a wild man, had begun the cry: "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Prepare by repentance." Baptism in the Jordan, a rite of the Essenes, was a symbol of that repentance and of that hope.

Jesus dedicated himself to the bringing of that kingdom. He planned the campaign carefully (forty days in the wilderness). He cleared his mind of fanatical ideas (the temptations). He chose a band of followers and went about the country proclaiming what John, down by the Jordan, had proclaimed. Jesus was a poet. He spoke often in parables. Multitudes flocked to hear him.

Miracles:

These were to him incidental. They seem to depend, in part at least, not only on the individual healed, ("Thy faith hath made thee whole") but on the excitement of the community. It is recorded that in one town he "did no mighty works because of their unbelief." He

had no objections to the man, not of his group, who went about "casting our devils." When asked for a sign, he refused. We might say, he would not accept laboratory conditions. But one essential condition may have been lacking, often mentioned by the narrators, as "He was moved by compassion." This may be considered as a primary ingredient of the healing consciousness.

I am perplexed. May I make here a general comment: I feel that knowledge is more important than belief. I think it is wise to wait for knowledge. One has to beware of the heart's desire. There is the wish to clarify, and there is the wish to obscure. The quest for knowledge of the mind, given impetus by Locke, is going on apace. Consider how recent is the work of Freud, and the present investigations of Dr. Rhine and others in the field of extra-sensory perception. Perhaps that part of our endowment which I have called non-symbolic will come into the purview of the scientists. It is generally ignored. Recently I heard Dr. Shapley mention the "genetic mind," meaning the same as the non-symbolic, but implying a different limitation. "Know thyself" is fundamental wisdom, though it does not promise mental ease.

Of course, I know that folk-lore tales had become current between the time of his death and the writing of the Gospels, that the writers themselves shared the beliefs of their time, and they were far from being interested in mere factual reporting. For instance, Luke who was a scholar with literary ability, in his account of the birth and infancy of Jesus, wrote several paragraphs that are essentially poems. Why should he not have made such a tribute to Jesus?

Now the teachings:
Much is not clear. The records that we have were made several years later, though doubtless earlier documents existed. We should not forget that our Greek texts give the sayings of Jesus in translation. They mention the "Hebraisti" words and in a few cases indicate the sound of the words expressed in Greek letters —as I have done using the English, or Roman letters for the Greek word, "Hebraisti." The word simply means spoken, or written, in Hebrew.

The Sermon on the Mount is considered man's most original and greatest series of observations on the nature of man and society. It certainly contains ethical comments envisioned as belonging to a coming Messianic Era. Jesus also saw and said, "The kingdom of God is within you." The two ideas of "kingdom" are not the same, though they are comparable. To lower types of mind (Judas) the Messianic kingdom was a political idea; to the Jews in general, a religious idea; in the mind of Jesus it had become an ethical, or spiritual, idea.

You can see, from what I have written, that my mind finds nothing to reject in the simple, descriptive words of Jesus, "I and my Father are one." It is as if a man in full vigor should say, "Life and I are one." Life is the gift and life is the giver. God is the gift and God is the giver. I see here two lines, parallel, but on different planes. I cannot believe

that I am simply juggling with words.

His death:

Its interpretation is a fundamental in the present Christian religion. He could have avoided it at that time. He did not. Again we must remember that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Their scriptures were sacred. Their prophets were not only poets, but foretellers. He saw himself as fulfilling their prophesies. To him, his death would be part of the terrible events that must precede the coming of the Messianic Era, a necessary part.

The account of his last days saddens me. Some persons may find in his death a great personal gain for themselves. I cannot do so. I see the stupidity and arrogance of the religious leaders, who feared what they could not understand, the moral weakness of those who had political and military power, the mob of wretched specimens of the human race, sadistic, and swayed by religious fanaticism, shouting, "Crucify. Crucify."

He died. In his death, as in his life, he revealed the power of G o d , that i n n e r kingdom of heaven, which is the glory of a life. The kingdom of heaven in its broader sense is coming among mankind as the higher spiritual purposes dominate more and more our human lives. This is our hope. There will always be struggle. It is inherent in life.

We, to whom the life of Jesus has seemed so brave and beautiful, may draw comfort to ourselves in the thought that Jesus did more to lift humanity to higher levels than any other has ever done. Perhaps his light will shine more clearly as the woven veil of theology is gradually withdrawn.

In these letters I have evidently undertaken a task impossible to accomplish. My theme has been "mind." The range has been from the phototaxis of a leaf to "My Father's Will" of Jesus. It is a vast range. Only glimpses I have had. Only glimpses I have tried to give.

Since mind is my theme, I can probably do no better than to close with an admonition from that stalwart Christian, Paul of Tarsus. I think he was writing to the Corinthians: "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

POSTSCRIPT

Dear Ted:

I did not write a preface to these letters. I may be permitted a postscript.

These were written one a day with but a few blank days intervening. Later a little altering had to be done to fit my thought. I have recommended in the first one that they be read singly on successive evenings. You may still do that if you wish, but my guess is that you will read them as you would a book of several chapters.

I take it that as a student of anthropology you belong to the group that the psychologist, William James, called "tough minded." So I have no compunctions about sending the letters to you.

But another matter puzzles and troubles me: Should letters such as these be published? What of the tender minded? I should have to say to them, "Friends, for some persons the heart's desire is paramount; for others the mind's necessity. I could not do other than I did."

I have just read through the letters, as if I had taken a book from the library. They are probably too frank and too intimate for the general public. I am content. Anyway, I have had my own thoughts clarified and my judgments confirmed by the writing.

There is something you might try for me: Give some student the letters, one by one. Let him, or her, read them on successive evenings. That would be an interesting experiment. Your findings and your responses I will greatly appreciate.

Sincerely,
Edmund

INSERT NUMBER ONE

(written later)

A writer complains:

"Don't you see what you have done? You live in a weird world. You have, instead of a magnificent universe, a bundle of sense impressions made into concepts; instead of an immortal soul, a so-called 'I' made of a bundle of concepts: and, instead of an Eternal God, a very-select bundle, yes, a self-selected bundle of attitudes, purposes, and aspirations, 'personified' you say. What is left that is real?"

There is an easy answer: What do you want to call reality? Do you want it perceived or unperceivable, imagined or unimaginable? I am glad you know you are alive, and that life is precious and of a tragic beauty. To me all is enhanced by my understanding.

Please notice: The protest you felt was real. In the broadest sense of the word it belonged to the spiritual realm. Your written protest is also real, but in a different realm.

Do not be bewildered by words. You can buy music at a store, "sheet music." You pay to hear music, "a concert." Both of these meanings refer to the realm of sense perceptions. But we may also speak of music in the creative imagination of the composer, a different realm but real. It is part of experience. Here the mind acts as an artist, putting together fragments of memory. Its activity ranges from dreams to the highest syntheses of musician, poet or philosopher. Recall how easily the poet, Shakespeare, designates different realms for music when he mentions, "The man that hath not music in his soul, and is not moved by concourse of sweet sounds."

INSERT NUMBER TWO

(written later)

Another complaint:

You express hope that humanity will find a higher spiritual level. I accept your concept of urges from the primal mind, and your idea of what constitutes the spiritual. You are even justified in calling the higher spiritual part of the individual "God in Us." But you have passed very lightly, even facetiously, over the subconscious.

My answer is:

There is health of the body as well as sickness of the body. So also of the mind, the involuntary compulsions that come from the primal mind or from established habits may be either constructive or destructive. The increasing knowledge of the complexity of the human mind is one of the reasons for my optimism about the future human and the human future. We are learning to detect early the signs of mental disease, and are developing improved methods of healing. We are finding childhood a precious spring-time for planting ideas of e x c e l l e n c e. (Plato's prescription) Religion has long offered correctives for a "bad bringing-up." Now psychologists have joined in what might be called moral orthodontistry. Habits of thought and habits of action n o r m a l l y become established, whether for good or ill. Until a pianist's technical skill has become "second nature" he is incapable of an inspired performance. So it is in all of life.

INSERT NUMBER THREE

(written later)

Another complaint:

I like your idea that the spiritual consists of attitudes, intentions, compulsions, and the like. But what right have you to classify them as you do?

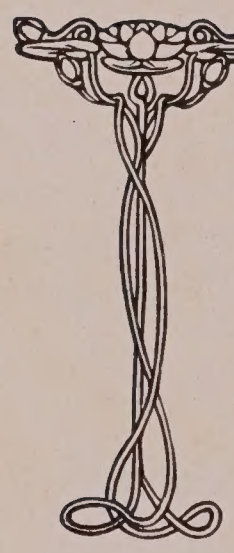
My answer:

As an individual I have the right, the necessity, in fact, of making moral and aesthetic judgments. They are doubtless based on individuality. Often they are modified, perhaps unconsciously, by self-interests. Quite as often they are affected by a consensus of opinion, the social environment. The "conscience" is derived both from the mores of the society and the personality of the individual. Because of this fact a startling difference may appear, and one may be sorely tried by the conflict in the mind. Life is not easy. Judgments of life's values differ. It would not surprise me to find that many persons behind prison bars may so exalt courage as to despise outsiders as too cowardly to commit a crime.

One thing we should note: The

so-called moral judgments are often aesthetic judgments, as the phrase suggests, there is "the beauty of holiness."

There may be other important objections to what I have written. I am only one individual, an individual with a composite mind, weathered and worn perhaps. The fact that this planet has brought forth "in the fullness of time" such beings as ourselves, with all our possibilities, is to me a matter for profound wonderment and thankfulness. I hope you share with me this conclusion.



"These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Shakespeare, *The Tempest,* Act IV.